

Colonoscopy

What is colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy (KOH-luh-NOS-koh-peel) is a test that can prevent colon cancer or find cancer early when it's easiest to cure. The test is done by a doctor who has training to find and remove polyps from the large intestine (colon) and check for signs of cancer. Polyps (PAH-lips) are growths in the colon that are not cancer. Some types of polyps can turn into cancer so it's important to remove them if they are found.

To look at the colon the doctor uses a thin, flexible tube called a colonoscope (koh-LAH-noh-SKOPE) that slides easily through the colon. It has a light and a camera and may also have a tool to remove polyps or to collect cells for more testing.

Before the colonoscopy

For the doctor to be able to see the colon it must be clean and free of stool (poop). Before the test, you will need to clean out your colon (colon prep) by drinking a special solution which acts as a laxative. This colon prep causes frequent stools and diarrhea. Consider staying home during this time because you will need to use the bathroom often.

Colon prep can also include drinking only clear liquids and eating no food the day before the test. Colon prep takes 1-2 days depending on what your doctor prescribes. If you think that the colon prep your doctor prescribes will be too hard for you, make sure to ask about other colon prep choices.

On the day of your colonoscopy test you will get medicine that will make you sleepy. The test is not painful. Most people do not remember anything about the test because they are in a light sleep.

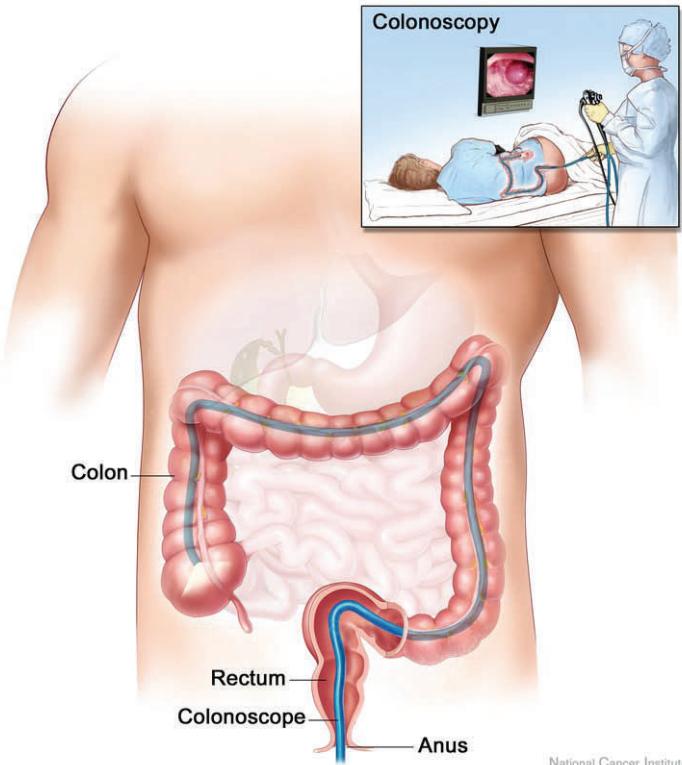
After the colonoscopy

After the test you will stay in a recovery area until you are fully awake. Plan on being at the doctor's office for about 2 hours. It is normal to have mild cramps or gas for about an hour. Someone will need to drive you home because you will be sleepy from the medicine you took before the test. If you don't have anyone to drive you home make sure to tell the doctor's office.

When you get home take it easy for the rest of the day. If you take care of small children think about asking someone to help you. Do not go to work or do strenuous activities like yard work or vacuuming. The next day you should be able to do your regular activities.

For more information about colonoscopy:

- National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service 1-800-4-CANCER or www.cancer.gov
- www.metrokc.gov/health/colon



National Cancer Institute